

ife THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

apt, indeed, to outrage not one, but all, of the decencies of social intercourse. " Thomas Wilkoxe," complained his fellow burgesses, " is excommunicated, and disquieteth the parish in the time of divine service. He is a horrible usurer, taking *id.* and sometimes *2d.* for a shilling by the week. He has been cursed by his own father and mother. For the space of two years he hath not received the Holy Communion, but every Sunday, when the priest is ready to go to the Communion, then he departeth the church for the receiving of his weekly usury, and doth not tarry the end of divine service thrice in the year."^{1f} Whether the archdeacon corrected a scandal so obviously suitable for ecclesiastical discipline, we do not know. But in 1578 a case of clerical usury is heard in the court of the archdeacon of Essex/¹ Twenty-two years later, a usurer is presented with other offenders on the occasion of the visitation of some Yorkshire parishes.^{1*} Even in 1619 two instances occur in which money-lenders are cited before the Court of the Commissary of the Bishop of London, on the charge of " lending upon pawnes for an excessive gain commonly reported and cried out of."¹¹ One is excommunicated and afterwards absolved ; both are admonished to amend their ways.¹¹

There is no reason, however, to suppose

that such
cases were other than highly exceptional;
nor is it
from the occasional activities of the ever
more dis-
credited ecclesiastical jurisdiction that
light on the
practical application of the ideas of the
age as to
social ethics is to be sought. Ecclesiastical
discipline
is at all times but a misleading clue to the
influence
of religious opinion, and on the practice of a
time when,
except for the Court of High Commission,
the whole
system was in decay, the scanty
proceedings of the
courts Christian throw little light. To judge
the degree
to which the doctrines expounded by
divines were
accepted or repudiated by the common
sense of the